
S & S RESTAURANT

1757/1773 NE 2ND AVENUE

Designation Report



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI
PRESERVATION OFFICER
TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE
S & S RESTAURANT
AS A HISTORIC SITE

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Consultant

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Passed and
Adopted on _____

Resolution No. _____

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:

S & S Sandwich Shop

Current Name:

S & S Restaurant

Location:

1757/1773 NE 2nd Avenue
Miami, Florida 33132

Present Owner:

S & S Eatery
1757 NE 2nd Avenue
Miami, Florida 33132

Present Use:

Commercial

Zoning District:

C-1, with an SD-20 Overlay

Tax Folio Number:

01-3231-003-0990

Boundary Description:

The northerly 31.65 feet of Lot 8 of Block 11 of the plat of MIRAMAR, as recorded in Plat Book 5, at Page 4, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Classification:

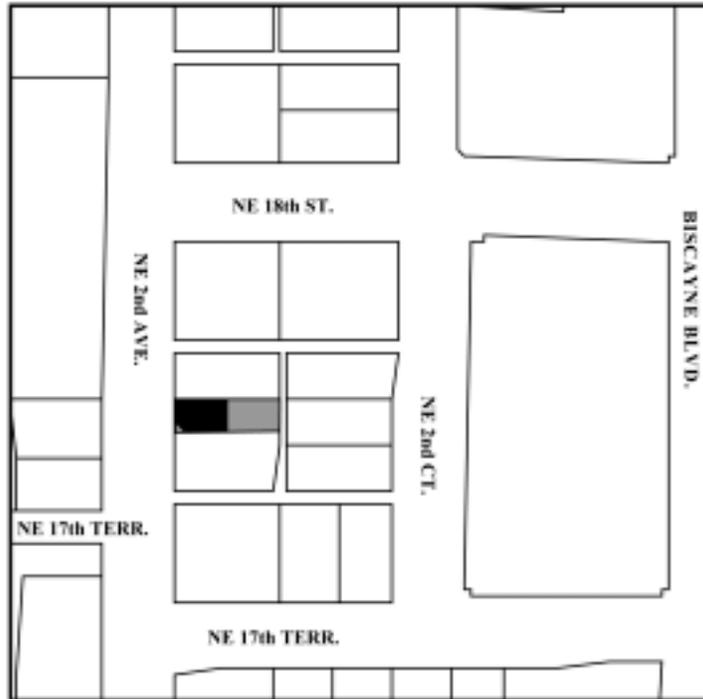
Historic Site

S & S RESTAURANT

1757/1773 NE 2ND AVENUE




location




site plan

II. SIGNIFICANCE

Specific Dates:

1938

Architect:

Unknown

Builder/Contractor:

Unknown

Statement of Significance:

The S & S Restaurant is an architecturally significant example of the Art Deco style applied to a small-scale commercial building. Its design, ornamentation and materials, and use of pigmented structural glass and aluminum are hallmarks of the Art Deco design. The S & S Restaurant is Miami's only known remaining example of the type of small restaurant that was once a popular and common amenity throughout the United States during the 1930s. Diners and sandwich shops have all but disappeared.

In the mid-1930s, following a slow recovery from economic disaster, the United States began to see a move away from historicist architectural designs in favor of a new modernism. Architectural Historian Spiro Kostof describes the style that has come to be known as Art Deco as "the crowd pleasing, indiscriminate playfulness that borrowed loosely from a variety of sources, from Cubism and Expressionism, from Mayan forms and Frank Lloyd Wright, from the machine aesthetic of progressive European designers and the 1925 Paris fair, the Exposition des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels, from which the style derives its customary name—Art Deco".

Art Deco was a style of decoration that was applied to jewelry, clothing and furniture, as well as architecture. Industrial designers used the motifs to decorate cards, trains, and household appliances. Common motifs include geometric designs, often as parallel straight lines, zigzags, chevrons, and stylized floral forms. The ornament was frequently "customized" for the locale. For example, in the Southwest, designs were influenced by Native American motifs, while in South Florida, the native vegetation and animal life were incorporated into the pattern.

The favored materials for Art Deco designs included concrete, smooth-faced stone and metal with accents that included terra cotta, structural

glass, and mirrors. Building forms were simplified and streamlined and frequently featured rounded corners, windows that follow the curve around the building, porthole windows, and balustrades that were curved to follow the building shape.

The S & S Sandwich Shop expresses many of these design characteristics. The doorway is set at the junction of the two right angles created by the sidewalls, but the rectilinear composition is transformed into a curvilinear shape by the addition of an aluminum eyebrow overhang installed directly above the glass storefronts.

The rectilinear geometry is expressed in the portions of the building that rise above the storefronts. The emphasis is on the horizontal through the use of alternating bands of pigmented structural glass. The use of this structural glass is another element that is almost exclusively associated with Art Deco designs.

Modern architectural design was in part a result of technology that created new building products. Stainless steel and plastics had a significant impact on the construction industry. While there had previously been an architectural glass industry, a new type of glass was introduced in the 1930s and was known as structural glass. Structural glass products included glass block, reinforced plate glass, and pigmented structural glass.

Manufactured pigmented structural glass was known by its trade names that included Carrara Glass (Penn-America Plate Glass), Sani Onyx (Marietta Manufacturing Company), and Vitrolite (Libby-Owens-Ford Glass). The material was especially popular because of its versatility. The glass could be sculpted, cut, curved, laminated, and colored. Initially the glass could only be produced in white, but by the 1930s architects could choose from a full range of color that included black, beige, ivory, forest green, robin blue, and tropic green.

In towns and cities across America, storefronts were "updated" at a relatively inexpensive cost with the structural glass that boasted of newness through its gleaming shine. Structural glass also was a common material used in new construction to achieve the streamlined look of Art Deco and Art Moderne designs.

The S & S Restaurant employs a three-color scheme of beige, white, and red to create the geometric banding of the wall surface. The use of the narrow red strips between the white structural glass is an effective pictorial device.

Diners were especially popular during the 1930s and sprang up everywhere, particularly as a roadside amenity. The definition of a restaurant as a diner is debated, but generally they are unpretentious, serving home-cooked meals for a reasonable price and featuring a counter with stools rather than

formal table seating. In the 1930s, diners were characteristically designed with shiny materials (e.g., stainless steel, chrome details), structural glass, and tile, and featured bright colors and art deco patterns. The word itself derives from the dining car of a train, as many of the early restaurants were actually the rolling stock converted into dining facilities.

Diners were often prefabricated and companies such as Jerry O'Mahoney, Inc. in Elizabeth, New Jersey, who manufactured diners from 1913 until 1956; the Worcester Lunch Car Company, Worcester, Massachusetts, who built them from 1906 until 1961; and Paramount Diners in Oakland, New Jersey, which began in 1932 and is still manufacturing, dominated the industry. While the S & S Sandwich Shop is not prefabricated, it shares many of the characteristics associated with a diner.

Its very dimensions create a narrow rectangle suggesting an interior that is designed for a long counter. Similarly the ornament and use of structural glass and stainless steel are frequently employed to achieve the "look" of a diner.

The opening of the S & S Restaurant took place on July 6, 1938. It adjoined the original shop at 1769 NE 2nd Avenue and was operated for six years by its owners, Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Sease. The building continues to operate today as a restaurant.

Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

The S & S Restaurant has significance in the historical and architectural heritage of the City of Miami; possesses integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association; and is eligible for designation under the following criteria:

3. Exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community.

The S & S Restaurant is Miami's only known remaining example of the type of small restaurant that was popular throughout the United States during the 1930s. Diners and sandwich shops were once a common building type, but most of these have disappeared.

5. Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction.

The S & S Restaurant is architecturally significant as an excellent intact example of the Art Deco style applied to a small-scale commercial building. Its design, ornamentation and materials, and use of pigmented structural glass and aluminum are hallmarks of the Art Deco style.

7. Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship of outstanding quality or which represent a significant innovation or adaptation to the South Florida environment.

The S & S Restaurant is particularly noteworthy for its design and materials, as evidenced in its application of horizontal and vertical bands of contrasting colors of structural glass and its porthole window.

III. DESCRIPTION

Present and Original Appearance:

Setting:

The S & S Restaurant is located on NE 2nd Avenue. The main elevation faces west, while the main entrance is on the southwest corner of the building. A driveway adjoins the building on the south.

There are no landscape features associated with this property.

Exterior Description:

The S & S Restaurant is a one-story masonry building that was constructed in 1938. Designed in the Art Deco style, this building is sheathed with structural glass in contrasting colors and terminates with a flat roof. Its west (front) elevation is only 12 feet wide.

The main entrance to the building is located on the southwest corner and consists of a single panel glass and metal door. Large plate glass windows flank the entrance on both the west and south façades. These windows are covered with a cantilevered sunshade, or eyebrow, that curves around the corner of the building.

The most outstanding architectural component of the building is its use of multi-colored structural glass arranged in a series of horizontal and vertical bands. A porthole window on the west façade is incorporated into the design. The original vertical sign has been replaced with a newer one. The structural glass surface extends only around the front portion of the south façade. The remainder of the building is surfaced with stucco. The building retains a high degree of architectural integrity.

Contributing Structures and/or Landscape Features:

The contributing structure within the site is the S & S Restaurant. There are no contributing landscape features on the site.



S & S Restaurant
1757/-1773 NE 2nd Avenue
South and west façades
2002

III. PLANNING CONTEXT

Present Trends and Conditions:

The S & S Restaurant holds a unique place in the genesis of Miami's downtown commercial buildings. It is located in an area that is zoned for both commercial and multi-family residential uses. The restaurant has maintained a loyal following over its lifetime, and has a cachet because of its unique design qualities and the "home-cooking" that has become its trademark.

Preservation Incentives:

The S & S Restaurant is not currently threatened, and apparently satisfies the economic returns desired on the part of the owners.

Financial incentives available for substantial rehabilitation projects conducted according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards are the ad valorem property tax abatement program currently available in Miami-Dade County. It is hoped the City will adopt a tax abatement program in the future.

V. Bibliography

Kostof, Spiro. A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals. New York: The Oxford University Press, 1995.

National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services. "The Preservation of Historic Pigmented Structural Glass (Vitrolite and Carrara Glass). #12," Preservation Briefs. Washington D.C., 1984

"S & S Sandwich Shop," The Miami Herald, 6 July 1938.

Web Site, www.dinercity.com "Diner Facts."